The Essence of Ontology in Islamic Philosophy: Discourse on Wujūd in al-Ḥikmat al-Mashā‘īyyat and al-Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq

This article seeks to analyze the concept of wujūd in Islamic philosophy, including the Peripatetic (al-Ḥikmat al-Mashā‘īyyat) and Illuminationist (al-Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq) schools. The study employs a discourse analysis approach, using data collected from an analysis of Islamic philosophy literature with a focus on the concept of wujūd in these two schools. The findings of the study show that despite using the same term, the concept of external reality has different meanings in different schools of Islamic philosophy. The Peripatetic school interprets wujūd as the basis of reality, but its extension varies depending on the differences in māhiyat (essence). The Illuminationist school, on the other hand, interprets wujūd as an addition to external reality, as the fundamental element is māhiyat. One of the novel contributions of this study is to highlight the sensitivity of the concept of essence in Islamic ontology, as evidenced by the different meanings of wujūd in the two schools of Islamic philosophy. However, both schools agree that wujūd is manifested as a mental reality, a predication for māhiyat. In mental reality, the fundamental element is māhiyat.

Keywords: Wujūd, māhiyat, Islamic philosophy, al-Ḥikmat al-Mashā‘īyyat, al-Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq

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Introduction

The discourse on wujūd, or being, is a fundamental element in Islamic philosophy (al-hikmat), Islamic theology (kalām), and Islamic mysticism (ʿirfān). In Islamic philo-sophy, the understanding of wujūd is a determinant of the differences between each school. The three major schools of Islamic philosophy are al-Ḥikmat al-Mashāʿiyyat (Peripatetic school), al-Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq (Illuminationalist school), and al-Ḥikmat al-Mutaʿāliyyat (Transcendent Theosophy). Each school has a different understanding of wujūd.

The study of wujūd is essentially the study of the fundamental elements of philosophy. However, there is still a paucity of literature on the study of wujūd in Islamic philosophy. Many studies of Islamic philo-sophy focus on certain dimensions of the philosophers’ thoughts, such as the axio-logical dimension (offering the principles of Islamic philosophy on the practical dimension). For example, Saleh and Humaidi studied the transformation of human personality based on Ibn Sīnā’s philosophical thought about the soul, emphasizing that the essence of happiness is not in material achievements but in the happiness of the soul that arises as a result of the willingness to accept God’s will. Meanwhile, ontological studies, such as studies on wujūd, are relatively rare. One notable exception is Mohammad Syifa Amin Widigdo’s article, which discusses the transformation of form into light by Shihab al-Dīn al-Suhrawardi and focuses on Mullā Sadra’s critique of al-Suhrawardi.

This article presents a comparative study of the concept of wujūd (being) in two schools of Islamic philosophy: al-Ḥikmat al-Mashāʿiyyat (Peripatetic school) and al-Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq (Illuminationalist school). The article argues that the meaning and reality of wujūd is a fundamental determinant of the differences between each school in Islamic philosophy, and that even within the same school, different interpretations of wujūd can lead to significant divergences of thought. To support this argument, the article employs a qualitative research methodology. Data were collected from books written by philosophers of al-Ḥikmat al-Mashāʿiyyat and al-Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq, as well as related academic literature.

Divine Tendency in Islamic Philosophy

The aforementioned reasons demonstrate that Islamic philosophy is a distinct school of thought from Greek philosophy, exhibiting a new identity that distinguishes it from both Aristotelian and Neoplatonic traditions. A key difference between the two is the sharper focus on ontology, or the study of being, in Islamic philosophy. This focus is evident in the work of al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Shihab al-Dīn al-Suhrawardi, and Mullā Sadra, who sought to synthesize their predecessors’ insights.

Undeniably, the emphasis on the study of Wujūd Ilāhiyyat (Divine Being) in Islamic philosophy is not only an attempt to bring philosophy closer to the Muslim world and reduce resistance from religious authorities, but also reflects the religious character and tendencies of its philosophers. For this reason, the Islamic philosophers refer to philosophy as ḥikmat (wisdom). Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a contemporary philosopher and scholar of Islamic philosophy, has argued that Islamic


philosophy is a discussion of Wujūd as it is (ashyā’ al-mawjūdat bi má hiya mawjūdat), or being as such. Philosophy is the knowledge of Wujūd Ilahiyyat and insiniyyat (Islamic transcendental humanism), and is a pre-requisite for ḥikmah.

 Influenced by Shihab al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, Mullā Sadrā defined philosophy as an endeavor to perfect the human soul through its abilities to comprehend existence through demonstration, rather than assumptions or opinions. This definition serves to sharpen the meaning of philosophy and to explain why Islamic philosophy is called al-ḥikmah. In his philosophical system, Mullā Sadrā explained that humans embark on four journeys in their lifetime. A philosopher comprehends these four journeys and formulates a conceptual explanation of them. This conceptualization of intuitive experience on experience in philosophical term is based on the principles of philosophical epistemology, namely solid propositions and right thinking as explained in the science of manṭiq (logic). The propositions that are constructed in the terminology of Islamic philosophy (hence the term al-ḥikmat) are in accordance with a philosopher’s mystical experience (hence the term ḥakīm).

For this reason, Mullā Sadrā strongly agrees with Shihab al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī’s qualifications for a philosopher, namely that they must have direct experience (ḥudūrī) and be able to convey that experience in philosophical term. By basing the conceptualization of intuitive experience on demonstrations, Mullā Sadrā’s teachings are slightly demarcated from philosophical Sufism. In philosophical Sufism, demonstration is not necessary as the foundation for knowing the truth of wujūd is kashf ḥudūrī (spiritual experience). However, Mullā Sadrā himself attached great importance to kashf ḥudūrī. Mullā Sadrā developed a philosophical concept which states that all faculties of the human soul, at all levels, be it sensory experience, rational analysis, or spiritual revelation experience, are the presence of the soul on different levels. He asserts that sensory perception is the presence of the same soul as rational analysis and kashf. This view differs from several schools of philosophy, including al-Ḥikmat al-Mashāʾiyyat, which still treats the soul and body as dualities.

**Discourse of Wujūd in School of al-Ḥikmat al-Mashāʾiyyat**

Al-Kindi (c. 800–870 CE) is credited with being the first philosopher to systematically explore the concept of wujūd in Islamic philosophy. A prolific writer, he authored over 300 works on a wide range of topics, including metaphysics, mathematics, and the natural sciences. However, only about 10% of his works have been preserved and edited. The paucity of al-Kindi’s surviving works can be attributed to a number of factors, including the difficulty of his Arabic prose, which reflected his struggle to adapt Greek philosophical concepts to the Arabic language. It is also possible that some of his works were destroyed during the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258 CE.

Despite the challenges, al-Kindi’s contributions to the study of wujūd were significant. He was the first Islamic philosopher to develop a comprehensive Arabic vocabulary for discussing metaphysical concepts. He also introduced the distinction between essential being (wujūd dhātī) and accidental being (wujūd ʿaraḍī), which was to become a central tenet of Peripatetic metaphysics.

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6 Cipta Bakti Gama, *Filsafat Jiwa*, 118.
Al-Kindi’s work on *wujūd* laid the foundation for the further development of this concept in the Peripatetic school by subsequent philosophers, such as al-Fārābī (c. 870–950 CE) and Ibn Sinā (c. 980–1037 CE).  

Although al-Kindi lived in a time when the translation of Greek philosophy into Arabic was well underway, Felix Klein-Franke argued that al-Kindi himself did not speak Greek or Syriac, the original language of many Greek philosophical texts. Prominent translators of Greek and Syriac works into Arabic included Ibn Nai’iman, Eushatius, and Ibn al-Bithriq. Ahmed Fuad Ehnawy said that al-Kindi played a pivotal role in the harmonization of religion and philosophy in Islamic thought.  

This was a challenging task, given the resistance of many theologians and jurists. However, al-Kindi’s efforts laid the foundation for the development of a rich and vibrant tradition of Islamic philosophy.  

Undeniably, the patronage of the rulers at the time facilitated al-Kindi’s intellectual career. However, his inability to speak Greek or Syriac makes his work all the more remarkable. Al-Kindi faced relatively little resistance when reviewing Neo-Platonic works. However, he encountered significant resistance when reviewing the works of Aristotle, whose philosophy was perceived as being too dry and lacking in a focus on the study of *wujūd ilāhiyyah*. Al-Kindi was delighted to discover a treatise that gave a high portion to *wujūd ilāhiyyah*, but it was later discovered that this treatise was not written by Aristotle, but by Porphyry, a student of Plotinus. The Enneads, a collection of philosophical treatises by Plotinus, deceived Muslim philosophers from al-Kindi to Mullā Sadrā. Al-Kindi, who was eager to find support for Islamic philosophy in the works of Aristotle, was too quick to embrace the Enneads, which he mistook for an authentic work of Aristotle. This led him to be less careful in tracing the work’s provenance and to overlook its Neo-Platonic origin.  

Through his study of the Enneads, al-Kindi formulated the concept of *wujūd ilāhiyyah* from a philosophical perspective. He argued that all realities are interconnected and form a chain of causes that ultimately leads back to a first cause, which is not the result of any other cause. Al-Kindi’s concept of *wujūd ilāhiyyah* can be understood as a philosophical rendering of the Islamic concept of “The One” (*al-ahad*). “The One” is the ultimate source of all being and is not itself caused by anything else. Al-Kindi’s prima causa is a similar concept, but it is expressed in more philosophical terms.  

Al-Kindi laid the foundation for a systematic study of philosophy in Islam. While philosophy had been studied in the Islamic world before, no one had yet compiled it into a system based on a distinctive epistemology. Before al-Kindi, only other sciences, such as mathematics (intermediate philosophy according to al-Fārābī later), and logic (which was taken up by *fuqahā* and *mutakallimin* for arguments in defense of revelation and the preparation of laws), were developed in the Islamic world. The study of form, which al-Fārābī later classified as natural science or philosophy, was not yet well-developed. Despite the limited literature on the subject and the widespread belief that the study of form was...
adequately addressed by revelation, al-Kindi was influenced by the Enneads to initiate a study of form that challenged the prevailing avoidance of Greek metaphysics due to its perceived opposition to revelation.

Al-Kindi divided philosophy into two parts: higher philosophy and lower philosophy. Higher philosophy included the study of *wujuḍ* (existence), the prima causa (ultimate cause), the soul, and the intellect. Lower philosophy included the study of the physical sciences, the body, creation, matter, and form. Al-Kindi argued that the forms of the underworld were created from nothing in the time dimension. This view was not objectionable to the *mutakallimin*, who also held that nature was created from nothing. In his study of *wujuḍ*, al-Kindi explained that creation occurs through emanation, a process in which the prima causa constantly radiates itself, giving rise to the forms of nature at various levels. Despite the abundance of scholarship on *wujuḍ ilāhiyyat*, some *mutakallimin* still resist al-Kindi’s views on the subject because they perceive him as giving too much weight to reason. Al-Kindi identified the Active Intellect with the Angel Gabriel and sees revelation as an achievement of the soul. However, he also used the term “intellect” as a philosophical term for *wujuḍ ilāhiyyat* itself. Al-Kindi himself admitted that human reasoning is incapable of reaching knowledge of the Absolute Existence.

Felix Klein-Franke argued that al-Kindi, the first philosopher in the Islamic world, rejected the absolutist conception of matter that was accepted by the *kalām* theologians. Al-Fārābī, a pivotal figure in the development of Islamic philosophy, radically developed the Neo-Platonic characteristics introduced by al-Kindi. He was also a leading exponent of *al-hikmat al-mashā‘īyyat*. In addition to his radicalization of the emanation of form in Islamic philosophy, al-Fārābī systematically developed a logical system. He distinguished logic as the science of the rules of correct thinking from grammar as the science of correct language. Al-Fārābī’s mastery of grammar enabled him to make philosophical explanations more accessible. Therefore, it is not surprising why Ibn Šinā would later be able to understand Aristotle’s teachings well after studying al-Fārābī’s thoughts. This Turkish-born philosopher really understood Aristotle’s thoughts. This is also what makes al-Fārābī known as the second teacher (*al-mu‘allim al-thānī*), while the title as the first teacher (*al-mu‘allim al-ulā*) was attributed to Aristotle. Al-Fārābī’s linguistic contributions made Arabic a more suitable vehicle for philosophical discourse, thereby facilitating the naturalization of philosophical principles from Greek and Syria.

The rich philosophical language developed by al-Fārābī was also instrumental in the initiation of Ibn Šinā’s philosophy. It thus contributed to other intellectual schools in the Islamic world, such as the study of *wujuḍ in kalām* and *irfān*.

According to Al-Fārābī, God is the First Being (*al-Mawjūd al-Awwal*) and the First Cause (*al-Sabab al-Awwal*) of all that exists (*mawjūd*). This means that God is the ontological and causal foundation of all reality. Al-Fārābī’s metaphysical study of *wujuḍ*, revolutionized Islamic thought, imbuing it with a new sense of divinity. He also pioneered the development of logic and reasoning in the Islamic world, providing essential tools for the rigorous pursuit of knowledge.
of knowledge. 27 However, as an Aristotelian, al-Fārābī developed a philosophical system based on the centrality of concepts (taṣawwur) and affirmations (tasdiq) in the production of definitions and demonstrative syllogisms. For al-Fārābī, knowledge must be certain. 28 This principle will serve as the foundation for later philosophers to develop the principle of certainty in the reality of being, which is the standard for exact knowledge.

Al-Fārābī was the first Muslim philosopher to classify ʿuṣūd in its manifestations as the power of the soul, dividing it into the power of nutrition, perception, and intellect. Ibn Sīnā later systematically refined this classification. Fārābī was aware of the Neo-Platonic origins of the theory of emanation, which he intentionally used to fill the void of divine discourse in Aristotelian philosophy. 34 In Plotinus’ metaphysics, the One Being, the ultimate reality, is so perfect that it cannot produce a plurality of forms directly. Therefore, it produces the first intellect, nous. Nous then produces the soul, and the soul produces matter (hyle). Matter is the passive substrate that, when united with form, produces material existence. 35

Al-Fārābī was the first philosopher to discern that Aristotle had alluded to the distinction between māhiyyat and ʿuṣūd. He elaborated on this distinction in his scheme of differences in ʿuṣūd and māhiyyat, which later became a cornerstone of the philosophy of Mullā Sadrā and Mullā Hādi Sabzawārī. 36 Aristotle’s prima causa, or first cause, is the perpetrator of the activity of thinking about thinking (noesis noeseos). 37 Al-Fārābī described this First Cause as Being thinking about Himself, because at the dawn of creation there was nothing but Him, the First. Al-Fārābī’s theory of emanation describes how the First Intellect (al-ʿawālī) emanates from

27 Deborah L. Black, “Knowledge (ʿilm) and Certitude (Yaqīn) in Al-Fārābī’s Epistemology,” Arabic Sciences and Philosophy, 2006, 11-45.
29 Black, “Al-Farabi”, 224.
30 Humaidi, Paradigma Sains Integratif Al-Farabi, 215.
31 Black, “Knowledge (ʿilm) and Certitude (Yaqīn) in Al-Fārābī’s Epistemology.,” 20-23
32 Humaidi, Paradigma Sains Integratif Al-Farabi, 36.
34 Kartanejara, Gerbang Kearifan: Sebuah Pengantar Filsafat Islam, 45.
35 Lee and O’Meara, “Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads.” 229.
36 Izutsu, Struktur Metasfika Sabzawari, 15.
the One Being (al-Wāḥid). The First Intellect then thinks about itself and its source of emanation, producing the Second Intellect. This process continues until the Ninth Intellect is produced. Drawing on Aristotelian, Neo-Platonic, and Ptolemaic cosmological concepts, al-Fārābī’s posited that the tenth intellect gives shape and actualizes human reason, while the ninth intellect produces the moon and the tenth intellect. The moon, in turn, produces matter. The set of three entities—matter, form, and intellect—produces humans and all other creatures of the material realm. Al-Fārābī’s concept of noesis noeseos, or thinking about thinking, connects these Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic elements of his cosmology, while also incorporating Islamic concepts of revelation.

The Qur’an describes that God created the seven heavens and the world in seven times. These postulates are connected with the concept of emanation, which posits that all of reality emanates from a single, transcendent source.

Following al-Kindī and al-Fārābī, the next Islamic philosopher from the Peripatetic school to continue the discussion of wujūd was Ibn Sīnā, known as the Shaykh al-Rais. His precocious intelligence and prodigious memory enabled him to master a wide range of scientific disciplines at a young age. Ibn Sīnā authored many works, the most famous of which is the encyclopedic al-Shifā’, which covers metaphysics, logic, mathematics, physics, biology, and medicine. Another important encyclopedic work by Ibn Sīnā, al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbihāt, discusses ontology, logic, physics, and sufism.

Ibn Sīnā’s metaphysical discourse in Islamic philosophy continues the tradition of manifest discourse inherited from al-Fārābī. One of the most important discussions in Islamic metaphysics is that of wujūd. The term wujūd is derived from the Arabic word wujīda, which means “to find”. It corresponds to the term “existence” in Western philosophy. While the term wujūd is often translated as “existence”, it is important to note that it has a unique meaning in Islamic thought. Ibn Sīnā’s elucidation of the distinction between wujūd and māhiyāt is one of his most significant contributions to Islamic metaphysics. Al-Fārābī first made this distinction, but Ibn Sīnā developed it in much greater detail. Ibn Sīnā analyzed a single entity in the mental realm (mind) and discovered that each entity is divided into its existence (wujūd) and its whatness (māhiyāt). In external reality, an entity is a single, non-dual entity, but it can be mentally analyzed into its wujūd and māhiyāt. Anything that can be an answer to the question “what is it” is māhiyāt.

Ibn Sīnā argued that wujūd is more fundamental than māhiyāt, which is merely an addition to wujūd. Since each extension (mawjūdat) is a single, non-dual entity, if māhiyāt were a fundamental form, it would be only a conception with no reality. Muslim philosophers after Ibn Sīnā, such as Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardi and Mir Dāmād, opposed his view, arguing that māhiyāt is more fundamental than wujūd. They reasoned that wujūd is always only a predicate for māhiyāt. For example, in the statements “The table is exist” and “The horse is exist” it is merely a predicate that asserts the existence of the subject, which is defined by its māhiyāt (tablehood or horseeness). Since the predicate is only a copula that connects the

39 Majid Fakhry, “Al-Farabi, 469.
subject to its existence, māhiyat is the more fundamental reality.\(^{43}\)

The debate over the fundamentality of wujūd and māhiyat arose because the scholars involved, both supporters and opponents of Ibn Sinā, interpreted his statement that wujūd was more fundamental in the mental realm. Ibn Sinā himself did not explicitly explain this distinction. It was Nasr al-Dīn al-Thūsī who later clarified that Ibn Sinā intended wujūd to be more fundamental than māhiyat in the external domain, but accepted māhiyat as more fundamental in the mental realm.\(^{44}\) Mullā Sadrā argued that wujūd is more fundamental than māhiyat, but not on the basis of the classification of form from Ibn Sinā’s perspective. Ibn Sinā held that existence is fundamental to external reality, and that each wujūd is different in each extension (huwiyyah). Mullā Sadrā, on the other hand, maintained that external reality is graded into each extension, becoming different until the emergence of diversity due to differences in mentally projected māhiyat.\(^{45}\)

Al-Fārābī divided form into two parts, while Ibn Sinā divided form into three parts: Wājib al-Wujūd (necessary being), mumkin al-wujūd (possible being), and mumtanī al-wujūd (impossible being). Ibn Sinā’s tripartite division is more nuanced and captures the full range of beings that can be conceived by human reason. Mumtanī al-wujūd refers to beings that are impossible to have reference to reality, such as shārik al-Bārī (God’s partner).\(^{46}\) In Ibn Sinā’s philosophy, wujūd is divided into two categories: Wājib al-wujūd and mumkin al-wujūd. Wājib al-wujūd is a being that exists by necessity, while mumkin al-wujūd is a being that exists by possibility. Wājib al-wujūd is further divided into two types: wājib al-wujūd bi nafsihī (necessary being by itself), which is the one who gives wujūd to mumkin al-wujūd, and wājib al-wujūd li ghayrihī (necessary being by another), which is wājib al-wujūd that is given wujūd by wājib al-wujūd bi nafsihī.\(^{47}\)

In Ibn Sinā’s thought, māhiyat is divided into two types. The first is māhiyat which is the answer to every question, “What is it?” This type of māhiyat is universal and can be applied to all beings of the same kind. For example, the māhiyat of “human” is the set of essential attributes that makes something a human, such as having two arms, two legs, and the capacity for reason. The second is māhiyat which does not separate from wujūd namely what is attributed to wājib al-wujūd bi nafsihī. This type of māhiyat is unique to each individual being and is inseparable from its existence. For example, the māhiyat of the specific human being Socrates is inseparable from his existence as Socrates.\(^{48}\)

The case of the philosophers’ misunderstanding in interpreting Ibn Sinā’s explanation of the fundamentality of wujūd on māhiyat highlights the importance of distinguishing between the conceptual and real wujūd in understanding philosophy. This distinction is essential for clearly interpreting explanations of the concept of wujūd and its reality, as well as explanations of motion. Conceptually, motion is the abstraction of the mind over two moments of time. In external reality, however, motion occurs in several accidental parts, namely quality, quantity, position, and place. Motion is also related to six things: a moving subject, the cause of the move, the location of the motion, the origin of the motion, the purpose of the motion, and time as

\(^{43}\) Izutsu, Struktur Metafisika Sabezawari, 47.


\(^{45}\) Susilo, “Teori Gradasi: Komparasi Antara Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi Dan Mulla Sadr,”


\(^{47}\) Hanafi, Filsafat Islam, 126.

an abstracted measure of the displacement of something that moves.\textsuperscript{49}

Causality arises from the observation of motion. For Ibn Sinā, motion is the change of the accidental parts of a substance, such as its quality, quantity, position, or place.\textsuperscript{50} The substance itself is not considered to be moving, because motion is a matter of two extensions, or two moments in time.\textsuperscript{51}

Ibn Sinā views the soul as a manifestation of \textit{wujūd} and a part of the substance, and thus it is not involved in the laws of motion. According to him, the soul only uses the body as an instrument, like a machinist driving a train. This is why the soul is said to only come to the body after the body is perfect, and hence Ibn Sinā defined the soul as the first perfection of the body.\textsuperscript{52} Ibn Sinā’s definition of the soul as the first perfection of the body is based on the argument that the soul remains intact even when the body is damaged or reduced. For example, if a person loses a limb, they still retain their knowledge about themselves.\textsuperscript{53} Therefore, the perfection of the body that Ibn Sinā refers to is the first perfection of the soul, because the soul continues to journey towards endless perfection even after it is separated from the body.\textsuperscript{54}

Ibn Sinā identified eight mental faculties, which he divided into three divisions: nutritive faculties (the power to absorb nutrients, the power to grow, and the power to reproduce), perceptive faculties (the power to move with the will, the power to perceive, the power to imagine, and the power to estimate), and rational faculties (the power of intellect).

The first three faculties are possessed by plants, the first seven faculties are possessed by animals, and only humans possess all eight faculties. The power of intellect is the most unique human faculty, and it is divided into practical thinking and theoretical reasoning. Theoretical intellect is further divided into four types: \textit{hayāla} intellect (the potential to think that has not yet been actualized), \textit{malakūt} intellect (the mind that is trained to accept abstract things), actual intellect (the mind that is used to think abstract things), and acquired/\textit{mustafad} intellect (the mind that is able to receive an abundance of \textit{wujūd} from the active intellect).\textsuperscript{55}

Ibn Sinā held that the soul and the body are two distinct substances. Consequently, when the body dies, the soul’s \textit{wujūd} is free to leave it. According to Ibn Sinā, only the soul will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment. This view was strongly opposed by theologians, such as Abū Hamid al-Ghazali.\textsuperscript{56} Another criticism of Ibn Sinā is his view of the origin of the universe.\textsuperscript{57} Abū Hamid al-Ghazali insisted that the universe was created in time from nothing. He argued that if the universe were eternal, it would have existed alongside God, which is impossible because only God is eternal.\textsuperscript{58} Ibn Sīnā held that the universe did not come into existence from nothing, but rather from something that has always existed.\textsuperscript{59} Such a view was attributed to the fact that in the principles of philosophy, it is impossible to give. In other words, it is impossible to incarnate existence from nothing, just like what occurs to the universe. Another contradiction of the \textit{kalam} views between Abū
Hamid al-Ghazali’s to Ibn Sīnā’s philosophy is about God’s knowledge of the particular.\footnote{60} According to Abū Hamid al-Ghazali, God can know the particulars known to humans. Ibn Sina, on the other hand, argued that God does not know particulars in the same way that humans do. If God did know particulars in the same way that humans do, then God’s knowledge would be the same as human knowledge, which is impossible. Al-Ghazali was one of the few theologians who had a deep understanding of philosophy. He was able to challenge the philosophical postulates of the Peripatetic school \(\textit{(al-Ḥikmah al-Mashā’īyyah)}\) quite effectively. His understanding of philosophy is evident in his works on logic, such as \(\textit{Mi’yār al-‘Ilm fi al-Mantiq}\), and epistemology, such as \(\textit{al-Maqāṣid al-Falāsifah}\). The latter work was written as a prelude to his critique of Peripatetic philosophy.\footnote{61}

**Discourse of Wujūd in School of al-Hikmah al-Mashā’īyyat**

The next thinker closely related to the thought of Mullā Sadrā is Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi. According to Ziai,\footnote{62} in contrast to the Peripatetic school, Suhrawardi replaced Ibn Sina’s terminology of \textit{wujūd} with the analogy of light. He termed \textit{wajib al-wujūd bi nafsīhi} as \textit{Nur al-Anwār} (light of all lights). Similarly, he replaced the levels of intelligence with \textit{anwār al-mujarradah} (abstract intellects).\footnote{63} Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi held that the true knowledge comes from within.\footnote{64} This view is similar to the recognized knowledge of the Sufis. However, Suhrawadi uniquely arrived at this understanding through a dream encounter with Aristotle. Hossein Ziai has stated that Suhrawardi’s presence symbolizes the victory of Platonism over Aristotelianism.\footnote{65}

\footnote{60} Louay Safi, \textit{The Foundation of Knowledge} (Selangor: IIUM Press, 1996), 96.

\footnote{61} Safi, \textit{The Foundation of Knowledge}, 96.


\footnote{66} Suhrawardi, “Hikmah Al-Isyrāq”, 13.

The accuracy of awareness-based knowledge is the spirit of Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi’s critique of the Peripatetics’ fundamental foundation: definition. A definition is a formula that reveals the essence of a thing and its constituent elements. According to Suhrawardi, defining something requires an understanding of the terms used in the definition. For example, the definition “Humans are thinking animals” requires knowledge of what “thinking” is. If “thinking” is not known, then it is necessary to first define “thinking”. But this new definition will also require knowledge of new terms, and so on. This process of defining terms leads to an infinite regress, which is impossible.

Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi argued that Aristotelian definitions prioritize knowledge over the essence to be known. For example, the definition “Humans are thinking animals” prioritizes knowledge of what “thinking” is over knowledge of what “human” is. Suhrawardi further argued that the term “animals” is even more obscure than the term “human” in explaining the essence of “human”. In other words, the essence of “thinking” is the essence of “human”, but it is impossible to define “thinking” using other terms. Therefore, Suhrawadi rejected the basis of Peripatetic epistemology, which is to build knowledge through definitions, propositions, and syllogisms.\footnote{66} All reasoning, whether inductive or deductive, depends on the acceptance of definitions. For example, in the deductive reasoning “All men will die; Aristotle is a man; therefore, Aristotle must die,” the validity of the argument depends on the definition of “man.” If
the definition of "man" is incomplete, then the reasoning becomes meaningless.67

Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi and some other philosophers argued that Aristotelian definitions cannot provide knowledge because they require knowledge that has already been proven. Such knowledge is self-evident and does not need a definition. Suhrawadi termed this knowledge the "vision of illumination," which he analogized to light. Nothing is brighter than light, so any attempt to define light using other terms is useless. Self-evident knowledge is acquired through direct experience or vision. Suhrawardi argued that self-awareness is a prerequisite for true knowledge (al-`ulūm al-haqqiqiyah).

For Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi, Knowledge must be comprehensive, not partial or redundant. The definition “Humans are thinking animals” is a combination of several terms, and if each term is defined separately, the definition will be redundant.68 Knowledge of something requires self-awareness (mudriq). Both the Source of Light and its rays are self-aware, except for those that are completely devoid of light (darkness).

Shihab al-Dn al-Suhrawardi replaced the system of reason (intellect) that reaches `aql mustafad derived from knowledge of the active mind with the idea of light. The idea of light is obtained through vision and illumination. Vision is self-preparation to attain direct knowledge. Vision occurs when Nūr al-Anwār illuminates everything so that vision and illumination are an inseparable whole. Human knowledge in this system occurs because of self-awareness through the principle of light that controls (al-anwār al-qāhirah) and the light that governs (al-anwār al-mudabbirah) who came from Nūr al-Anwār.69 The knowledge that is present to humans in this system is called nūr al-isfahbat. This experience is called the apocalyptic light (al-anwār al-saniḥah).70 The teachings of Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi were then continued by Qutb al-Din Shirāzī and his teacher Mullā Sadrā, Mir Dāmād.

Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi’s system of direct knowledge through self-awareness can be said to have inspired Mulla Sadra in formulating his concept of the union of the subject and object (ittiḥad al-`āqil wa al-ma`qūl). However, Sadra’s concept is more similar to that of Ibn ‘Arabi. Suhrawardi’s philosophy greatly influenced Sadra, especially in his view that a good philosopher must have a broad mind and sound reasoning abilities. Meanwhile, Sadra criticized Suhrawardi on the fundamental issue of māhiyat (essence). For Suhrawardi, māhiyat is the basis of reality, while Sadra argued that wujūd (existence) is fundamental.

Conclusion

The Peripatetic school of Islamic philosophy, pioneered by al-Kindī, developed systematically by al-Fārābī, and perfected by Ibn Sīnā, is characterized by its emphasis on the distinction between essence (māhiyat) and existence (wujūd). In the intellectual dimension, wujūd is an addition to māhiyat, but in external reality, wujūd is fundamental. There are various wujūd in external reality, which differ according to their māhiyat).

In contrast to the Peripatetic school, Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi, the founder of the Illuminationist school, replaced wujūd with nūr (light) as the fundamental principle of reality. In the Illuminationist system, wujūd, as in mental reality, is only an addition to māhiyat. The distinction between the Peripatetic and Illuminationist schools can be used to develop a more effective approach to teaching Islamic thought. In particular, students should be taught

68 Muhammad Muslih, “Kesadaran Intuitif Plus Cahaya Ilahiyyah: Husserl Di Muka Cermin Suhrawardi;”
69 Suhrawardi, “Hikmah Al-Isyrāq;”, 11-12.
70 Ziai, Suhrawardi dan Filsafat Iluminasi, 225–227.
to identify the key differences between the two schools in order to better understand the diverse range of Islamic thought.

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